

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT MOTION PICTURE BUREAU

1917 ~ 1941



by Charles Backhouse

CANADIAN FILM ARCHIVES
CANADIAN FILMOGRAPHY SERIES NO. 9

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT MOTION PICTURE BUREAU

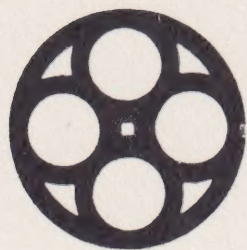
1917 – 1941

by

Charles F. Backhouse

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Charles Frederick Backhouse was born in Ipswich, England on the 10 October 1931, the second son of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Leslie Backhouse. Following his secondary education, he emigrated to Canada and worked for several years in the film and broadcast industry as a writer and producer. After employment with the BBC in London, the CBC in Toronto and Calgary and the KBC in Nairobi, Kenya, he entered the University of Calgary, Canada in September 1967 and graduated BA (with distinction) in May 1971. In August 1971 he entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin where, in addition to his studies, he conducted undergraduate classes in television production techniques and lectured in international broadcasting. He presently resides in Kenya.

FOREWORD

There has been hardly any attempt to chronicle or keep track of Canadian films and film history, so much has disappeared.

Gerald Pratley
(*Concise History*, p. 167)

Although this book was primarily written as a Master's thesis (Communication) for the University of Texas, Austin, it was also something of a labor of love, happily reflecting my background as a film-maker with a lifetime interest in things historical.

The requirements for a Master's degree do not necessarily demand the breaking of new ground but I was encouraged to do so when my initial research revealed that with the exceptions of an informative booklet by the historical Section of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, no-one had drawn together the full history of the two Canadian Government film bureaux that preceded and in many ways pre-formed the National Film Board of Canada. I felt that this was a serious omission since Canada had been first in the field of international film publicity following the 1914-18 war, and had remained a much admired and emulated leader until the events of the Depression years in the late twenties and early thirties.

With no other comprehensive works to consult as reference almost all of the material used is taken from primary sources, from government files, records in private collections and from interviews with persons connected with the events under discussion. The major part of the research took place in the Canadian Public Archives in Ottawa where the *Annual Reports* of the Department of Trade and Commerce provided an excellent if somewhat condensed chronological record. I was also allowed access to all existing files of the department both in the Archives and in the Industry, Trade and Commerce library in Place de Ville. Some of the material gathered by the department's official historian proved most useful, part of it being reproduced in the appendix.

Visits to the National Film Board in Ottawa and Montreal yielded some information, mostly of a technical nature, and through the good offices of the NFB I was able to trace and interview several ex-employees of the Motion Picture Bureau or their families. Two of these, Mr. Archie Shaw and the family of the late Captain C. C. Badgely were kind enough to show me personal scrapbooks of the period.

I am indebted to the Canadian Film Institute, Ottawa, for the use of their library of books, trade magazines and documents on early Canadian film, and for the opportunity to view several of the films produced by the Motion Picture Bureau now held in their archives. Above all I am most grateful to Mr. Peter Morris, curator of the Canadian Film Archives for his enthusiastic guidance at the beginning of this project and for editing the final product. All the illustrations in this book were selected by Peter Morris from the collection at the Canadian Film Institute.

The library of the University of Texas, Austin provided some material and I was constantly encouraged by my graduate committee, especially my mentor Dr. Stanley Donner.

Attempts to fill out the history with comments and articles from contemporary Canadian newspapers and magazines met with little success. Few of the major newspapers are indexed for the years under consideration — *La Presse of Montreal* for example is only indexed from 1966 — and the *Canadian Periodicals Index* did not begin publication until 1938.

Of much more serious consequence to the historian is the incomplete state of the government records held in the Public Archives, in part due to the disastrous fire of 1946 in the main block of the Parliament Buildings which destroyed a considerable number of documents. Government archivists also explained that many files were removed from the shelves at the beginning of World War II in order to make room for the anticipated increase in wartime paperwork. There is little consolation in the fact that these files were re-cycled for the value of the paper they contained, in truth their least valuable element.

In a paper recommending the formation of a national film archives Guy Côté says "There is no known listing of Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau films 1919-39" (*For a Canadian Film Archives*, p. 17) and in a personal interview, Archie Shaw confirmed that in his ten years as executive assistant to the director no such list was ever compiled. Individual copies of the film catalogues published annually by the Bureau can still be found but there does not appear to be a complete collection in existence.

However, with the study of film growing in respectability more material may well come to light. The Public Archives recently acquired a collection of some one million feet of early Canadian film that had lain abandoned in a barn in Northern Ontario for more than 30 years. Similar acquisitions have been made by the Canadian Film Institute, which also reports a constant trickle of minor purchases, gifts and donations of film and related equipment and documents. Regular representations are also made to film institutes overseas for copies of similar material relevant to the Canadian scene.

In view of the foregoing, perhaps this book may serve as a foundation for further film studies, using new or previously untapped sources, or at the very least help illuminate an otherwise virtually unrelieved part of the history of early Canadian film.

Limuru, Kenya
October 1973

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING 1918-1920

In days gone by the pamphlet was a means of education. Today it is the screen that enlightens and educates.

(Public Archives RG20 107
24089 Vol. 1, 1 May 1918)

The story of the early years of motion pictures in Canada is rich in incident but tragically poor in chroniclers. In addition to a general apathy in both the private and official sectors the very nature of the early nitrate-based film was to self-destruct under poor storage conditions, often destroying invaluable paper records in the process.

From the documented highlights that remain, it is clear that Canadian involvement with film has been both long and chequered. When Edison designed his Kinetoscope machine in the 1890's, he failed to recognize its commercial value. It was the Holland brothers, two Canadians from Ottawa, who gave the first public exhibition of motion pictures at the Kinetoscope Parlor, 1155 Broadway in New York City in 1894. Andrew Holland and his brother George owned a store in Ottawa that dealt in storage batteries, phonographs and typewriters, and they had thus been agents for several of Edison's products. They persuaded Edison to go into production of the Kinetoscope and acquired the rights to the first ten machines, which they then used at their New York showing 14 April 1894.

Four years later, the world's first sponsored film was produced by Edison Studios for the Massey-Harris Company of Canada, and shown to an enthusiastic audience at the Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto in the summer of 1898.

Another sponsor of many early films was the giant Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The CPR had completed the tracks that now linked the nation from sea to sea in 1885, but in order for the railroad to operate viably it was necessary to encourage settlers to move out to the newly formed western provinces. In 1899 impressed by the latent publicity value of the moving picture, they sponsored a British tour of films shot by a Winnipeg man, James Freer. Three years later, the CPR contracted with Charles Urban to film along their trackage and to exhibit the films in the United Kingdom and abroad. Urban, an American who had become very successful in the British film industry, brought out from England a crew consisting of Joe Rosenthal, F. Guy Bradford and Clifford Denham. The names of these cinematographers recur again and again in the history of early Canadian films and their distribution. Interviewed half a century later, Denham recalls that much of the footage was shot from a flatcar pushed ahead of the engine. All the work was done in the summer months since the unit was under strict instructions not to film snow scenes, which might discourage immigrants. (Joe Rosenthal, however, took the opportunity to film some winter sport scenes which were released by

Urban separately from the CPR films.) According to Denham, reports from the CPR showed the results on immigration to be most favorable, but regrettably, only a fraction of this film material is known to exist today. (*Canadian Motion Picture Yearbook*, 1951, p. 74)

However, such success did not attend all film ventures, and Gerald Pratley writes of the period that followed the turn of the century:

[it was] one long, frustrating chapter of plans made and never realized, of studios opened and rapidly closed, of large sums of money invested in brave ideas and bankruptcy, of rogues and rascals from abroad who prompted fancy schemes, profitable to them and disastrous to Canada. Due to . . . lack of initiative on the part of the Government and investors, most of Canada's talented people left the country. There was no work, and there was no Government policy to encourage and protect native production. (*Concise History*, p. 164)

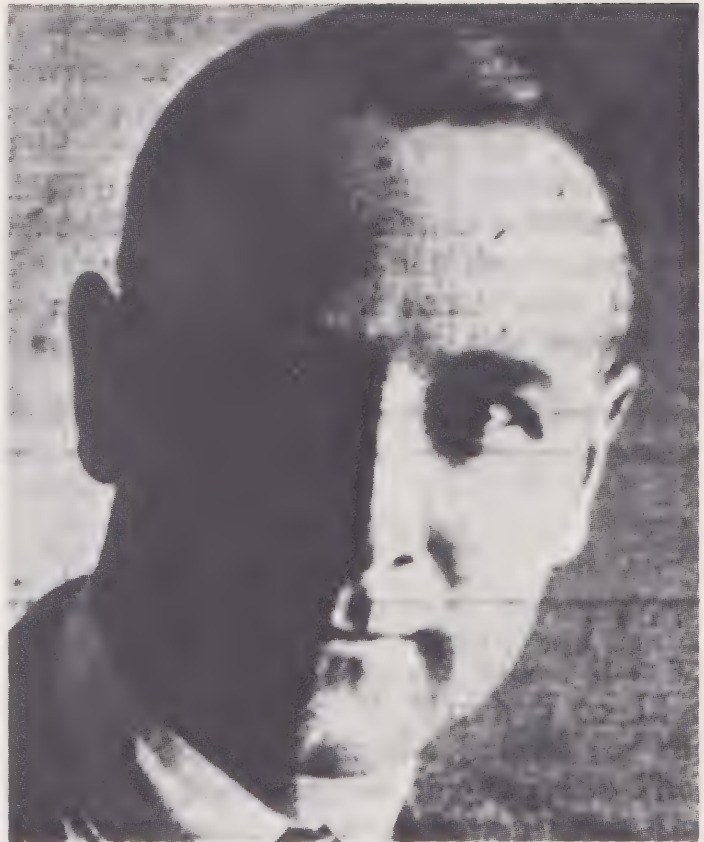
But while the Government was not anxious to legislate this budding industry, apart from the early imposition of provincial censorship in Quebec and British Columbia, it was not unaware of the power of the medium. In the federal government the two departments most interested in publicity were Trade and Commerce and the Department of the Interior, which included the Parks Branch. Throughout the years 1914-15 the respective ministers Sir George Foster and Dr. Roette had exchanged views on the use of moving pictures to publicize Canada's natural resources and productive capabilities, and during a visit to England in the war years Sir George made further inquiries of the motion picture industry there. As a result of these inquiries Sir George received a letter in 1916 from a Mr. Clozenburg of the Cartoon Film Company of London, who offered to "popularize and advertise Canada, and its resources, by means of Cinematography." (Public Archives RG20 163 16613 Vol. 1, 29 June 1916) His offer, which included distribution as well as production, would have cost the Canadian Government some \$50,000 per year, and was politely refused by Sir George. Nothing daunted, when the government film unit was established a year later, Mr. Clozenburg again offered to act as distributor for their films and was again refused.

However, before Trade and Commerce had finalized plans for an inter-departmental photographic unit in Canada, the Imperial War Office stepped briefly but dynamically into the field of film production. In 1916 the War Office Cinematographic Committee was formed in response to a flood of requests from individuals and companies seeking permission to shoot footage of the war in Europe. Under the chairmanship of Lord Beaverbrook, the committee acted as a single authority to co-ordinate all such requests. In addition the committee sub-contracted work to the Topical Film Company of London, and when this arrangement proved unsatisfactory the committee promptly bought out 51% of the company's stock, thus ensuring control over its production. During October 1917 the committee "entered into an agreement with Mr. David Wark Griffith, the well known film producer, for the production of a cinematographic film dealing with the War." (*Ibid.*, 27 July 1919). This film, known as *Hearts of the World*, was first shown in London in 1918,

BUREAU DIRECTORS 1917-1941



B.E. Norrish 1917-1920



R.S. Peck 1920-1927



F.C. Badgely 1927-1941



The Bureau on location about 1930.



and was subsequently exhibited in all parts of the United Kingdom with great success. All proceeds from this and other films produced under contract with the committee were donated to war charities. When the committee was disbanded in 1919 the shares of the Topical Film Company were sold at a profit, and this too was given to charity. All wartime negatives and prints were stored in the War Office archives, later the Imperial War Museum. This would appear to be the first recorded instance of government participation in any major way in film production and distribution.

It was in 1917 that Trade and Commerce took the first positive step towards the formation of a departmental film unit. As with the sweeping action of the Imperial War Office Committee, the department's decision was also provoked by an unfortunate experience with sub-contracting film. The previous year a request had been filed in Ottawa from the Bureau of Commercial Economics, the United States government publicity agency in Washington. The agency was interested in exhibiting films of Canada's grain and water power industries, and the Canadian government in turn could see the publicity advantage to be gained from such an exhibition. There being no Canadian company with the facilities to handle such an assignment, a contract was made with the Essanay Company of Chicago and Hollywood. Much of the filming took place in areas supervised by the Water Powers branch, a division of the Department of the Interior. The branch was fortunate in having a chief draughtsman, Ben Norrish, who not only held a B.Sc. from Queens University but was also keenly interested in the business of moving pictures. Norrish was an aggressive, energetic man who had spent a considerable amount of his spare time learning about the film industry by visits to the E.I. and S. Corporation in New York, then the largest moving picture studio in the USA, the Essanay Company in Chicago and the Ford Motor Car Film Unit in Detroit. His superiors were aware of his interest and put him in charge of the Essanay film unit for the duration of the production.

Although the resulting films were of good quality and received favorable comment from audiences in the United States and elsewhere, the cost in both time and money was prohibitive. It was obvious to Canadian officials that such work could be done with greater efficiency and much less expense by a government film unit, and Norrish later commented in a memo to Deputy Minister O'Hara, "Although the Essanay Company received a very liberal reward for their work, at least 90% of the direction . . . was entirely in the hands of government officials." (Public Archives RG20 107 24089 Vol. 1, 29 November 1919)

One of the responsibilities of the department of Trade and Commerce was to publicize Canada and Canadian products abroad, and in the past this had been done with exhibits at various national fairs and by printed materials handled by Canadian Trade Commissions. Deputy Minister O'Hara was a far-sighted man, prepared to move with the times. He saw quite clearly the propaganda value inherent in moving pictures but knew that the department would have to move rapidly to establish control. He wrote a memo to the Minister, Sir George Foster, urging

that Trade and Commerce be first in the field, warning that:

some of the other departments are apparently going into it (making films) on their own hook, but I think that if we were to go into it a bit more actively, we could save considerable duplication and establish an important work in this line. (*Ibid.*, 11 May 1917)

He suggested the immediate transfer of Norrish to Trade and Commerce and proposed that the Canadian Trade Commissions spread throughout the Empire should handle film distribution, "which would really amount to a worldwide circuit." (*Ibid.*)

Sir George was most receptive to the idea of a departmental film unit, but instructed that the only films to be circulated were those "with but a reasonable amount of advertising permitted." (*Ibid.*, 14 June 1917)

This attitude of mild understatement was to characterize most of the films produced by the Bureau in the following two decades, and still distinguishes the better made Canadian government productions.

Norrish joined the department officially in September 1917, moving into makeshift studios located in the Commercial Exhibitors Building in Ottawa. There were no facilities for production, and Norrish spent several months viewing, selecting and acquiring the rights to various industrial films already in existence. He then arranged for their distribution in the United States through the Essanay Company, and took advantage of his previous contact with that company to hire away their best cameraman, Arthur E. Reeves.

Getting Reeves on staff presented some difficulty, for the Civil Service list had no category for cinematographers, and as Norrish explained to O'Hara, Reeves was asking for \$175 a month, "a little high, but very reasonable as salaries go in this line of work." (*Ibid.*, 7 February 1918) Norrish's salary that year was \$1900, or slightly less than that of his first cameraman.

While negotiations with Reeves were pending, Norrish urged a major purchase of equipment, aware that other departments were planning to develop film units as soon as the war was over. Norrish had a good head for business and suggested to the deputy minister that in the future all photographic work should be handled through one department. "If we were well equipped," he insisted, "there is no doubt that other departments would be glad of such an arrangement." (*Ibid.*) He suggested that although costs to the department might amount to some \$15,000 per year, there would be considerable revenue from film rentals and from work done for other departments. He also politely reminded O'Hara that "the greatest returns would come, not only to the department, but to the country in general," in terms of propaganda. (*Ibid.*, 19 February 1918)

Given Norrish's forceful personality, it is possible to suspect him of empire building, but there is much logic to the idea of a centralized, government controlled photographic unit and Trade and Commerce were the obvious people to develop it. A \$5000 order for equipment was placed with the Bell and Howell Company of Chicago (see Appendix B) and the new division, now having substance, was given the name of Exhibits and Publicity Bureau by the minister. The Bureau was also to

include a permanent exhibit of trade items from around the world, the collection to be housed in the same building in Ottawa.

In order to press home their advantage and to make the purpose of the Bureau known, Trade and Commerce held a special viewing of Canadian industrial and travelogue films to which all cabinet ministers, senators and members of Parliament were invited. The official press release says that the films were well received and continues,

Publicity is a means to an end, and in the case of the Trade and Commerce department the inauguration of a motion picture bureau is the beginning of a publicity campaign to make Canada known, as she really is, at home and abroad. (*Ibid.*, 1 May 1918)

The Exhibits and Publicity Bureau was given official recognition by Order in Council PC 2307 date 19 September 1918, which says in part

that the department of Trade and Commerce establish an organization for the taking of motion picture negatives, development of films therefrom and the making of lantern slides and still photographs, (and instructs) that publicity work undertaken by departments which require preparation of films and slides be carried out in consultation and cooperation with that organization. (*Ibid.*, 19 September 1918)

In the few Canadian publications that deal with this period there appears to be some confusion as to the date of the beginning of the Bureau, the year 1914 being most often quoted. However, the official government Order in Council is dated September 1918 and may thus be regarded as definitive.

The recommendations that all publicity films be channeled through the Bureau was not a popular one in some departments, notably the Department of Agriculture, which had sub-contracted and distributed a number of films in the past year. Current provincial regulations required that non-safety film be projected only by licensed operators using approved equipment, a sensible precaution against fire and a regulation that cinemas found easy to obey. However, most of the films circulated by the Department of Agriculture were screened in schools, barns and church halls by non-licensed operators, and the department complained that it would be impossible for them to show films printed on the bureau's nitrate-based stock. Although Norrish protested that safety stock was also available, he could make no headway, but the Deputy Minister rose hotly in defence of his staff when Agriculture further accused them of technical incompetence. "I can scarcely conceive of any work . . ." says O'Hara in an angry letter to that department ". . . which cannot be handled by our Mr. Reeves, who happens to be one of the finest cameramen on the continent." (*Ibid.*, 31 December 1918) The Department of Agriculture won the battle however, and were specifically exempted from the provisions of the previous order by a new Order in Council, PC 596, on 29 March 1919. This exemption and the precedent it created was a thorn in the side of the Bureau for the next twenty years, and was to be one of the factors that finally brought about its demise.

Other complaints came from the public sector. Mr. H. de Witt, president of the Pathescope Company expressed his surprise that Trade and Commerce, a

department dedicated to encouraging new Canadian enterprises, should now deprive the Canadian film industry of all government photographic work. De Witt's annoyance was understandable, since a proposal by the Pathescope Company to the government was still being studied when the formation of the Bureau was announced. However, Norrish rightly pointed out that Pathescope were using only the non-theatrical 28mm safety film for release prints as compared to the industry 35 mm standard, and that film gauge compatibility was most important in developing worldwide distribution.

But not all comment was unfavorable. With secure markets in Great Britain and other parts of the Empire, the Bureau now began film distribution on the continent of Europe. This was an important step since the countries of Europe, just recovering from the war, were eager to purchase raw materials and other trade goods, and Canadian industry stood ready to serve them. Publicity put out by the Bureau demonstrated most dramatically what Canada had to offer, and at the 1919 Trade Fair in Lyons, France alone, the Bureau screened more than 14,000 feet of film in a specially constructed theatre built near the Canadian sector.

This surge of publicity overseas had not gone unnoticed south of the border, and United States Secretary of Commerce Redfield quoted the Canadian example when demanding a larger appropriation for American government film productions in 1920. (*The Moving Picture World*, March 1919)

However, such publicity did not come cheaply, and in correspondence with the Minister, Norrish reported that running the Bureau in 1919 had cost the department \$90,000 with revenue from film showings amounting to only \$1600. (Public Archives RG20 107 24089, Vol. 1, 11 December 1919) Norrish was also having some difficulty in persuading the Civil Service Commission to offer an attractive salary for a cameraman to replace Reeves, who had just left the Bureau. Film production was lagging in the meantime since Reeves was the only photographer competent to shoot the technically more demanding indoor scenes. Most of the Bureau's films were shot outdoors, and the staff had become very proficient in these conditions, but they still lacked the experience in lighting and shooting complex interiors and machinery to the standards demanded by industrial film.

While the search continued for a suitable replacement for Reeves, Norrish himself was lured away by offers from the private film industry, and resigned from the Bureau in June 1920 to join the Associated Screen News Corporation of Montreal, founded by Canadian Pacific.

In the three years that Norrish had been in command, the Bureau had grown from an idea to a functioning reality, a small but competent, well-equipped photographic unit, the first such continuing government publicity unit in the world. Orders from other departments were on the increase, the number of Bureau-produced films was growing monthly and tentative essays into overseas distribution had proved to be more than successful.

As the fiscal year for 1919-20 drew to a close, the future for the Exhibits and Publicity Bureau appeared very bright indeed.

CHAPTER II

THE GOOD YEARS 1920-1931

The Canadian Government, through motion pictures, is doing a work that is far reaching in its influence, and is much in advance of any other foreign governments in utilizing the possibilities of the screen.

*(Quebec Chronicle,
3 November 1921)*

Norrish was replaced by Raymond Peck in July 1920. Peck, formerly a film editor with the Bureau, at first took over in an acting capacity, but was confirmed as director in 1921. Capitalizing on the impetus and experience the Bureau had already built up and aware that they were front runners in the field, Peck expanded production and developed new circulation markets overseas. At times there were difficulties but Peck was always certain of the support of the deputy minister. O'Hara had a reputation as a strict disciplinarian but he was also staunchly loyal to those who worked for him. Keenly aware of the importance of the work of the Bureau to the department, the government and the nation, O'Hara, in office from 1908 to 1931, was a permanent source of strength. The nagging problem of making salaries attractive enough to hire good staff continued, and in exasperation O'Hara once declared, "If necessary, I will do anything I can to ignore the (Civil Service) Commission, and fight them afterwards, in view of the history of our efforts to obtain a motion picture photographer!" (Public Archives RG20 107 24089, Vol. 1, 18 June 1920) Another minor crisis occurred in 1922, when the demand for films was greater than the Bureau's capacity to produce. Peck was anxious to placate the hostility of the film industry by sub-contracting all printing work, but O'Hara was adamant that the Bureau should remain firmly in control. It was mainly due to his efforts that the vote for the next fiscal year contained sufficient extra money for the purchase of new laboratory equipment.

However, even O'Hara's eloquence could not persuade the Department of Agriculture to use the facilities of the Bureau. The department continued to place work with the film industry, claiming with some justification that many of the films required equipment the Bureau did not possess, mainly a long lens and a camera capable of slow motion photography. O'Hara himself received considerable support from above, and once wrote to Peck that they were "fortunate enough to have a minister who is keenly alive to the potentialities of the screen as a national advertising medium." (Historical Section 163, 30 October 1926)

At this time a reorganization of the entire publicity department took place, including a change of name. Although the status and reputation of the film division of the Bureau had improved over the years, the conditions of the permanent trade exhibit housed in the same building had deteriorated badly. Paying a surprise visit to the exhibit late in 1921, O'Hara was appalled by what he found,

and in a curt letter to H. R. Pousette, Director of the Commercial Intelligence Service, he declared the entire display "no use to Canadian industry (and) is in fact a disgrace to the department." (Public Archives RG20 107 24089, Vol. 1, 20 October 1921)

The permanent trade exhibit was scrapped a year later. With this in mind, and not wishing the Bureau to be associated with a failure, Peck suggested to O'Hara in 1923 that the name of his division be changed to the Dominion Government Motion Picture Bureau. He felt that this title more closely reflected the principal occupation of the unit and freed it from the odium of the term "exhibit". Peck was also anxious to be rid of the word "publicity" since "so many crimes have been committed in the name of publicity that the word is more or less in bad odour in newspaper and advertising circles." (*Ibid.*, 8 March 1923) The Minister agreed to the change with one substitution, and the title of Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau became effective 1 April 1923. No Order in Council was issued and the change was effected purely on the authority of the Minister, the Hon. J. A. Robb. Since the financial estimates had already passed the House in the name of Exhibits and Publicity, accounts were still rendered in that name until the end of the fiscal year in March 1924. The old letterhead was also used until stocks were exhausted, and since the two titles were used interchangeably for several months, the nomenclature of this period can prove quite confusing to the unwary.

One important result of the reorganization was the designation of the still photographic section as a division of the Bureau. It had been departmental policy from the beginning to send still cameras on all photographic assignments and the section had built up an impressive collection of photographs. These were now much in demand by newspapers and magazines, and were often processed into large blow-ups for display or transparencies for lantern slides. Official recognition for the Stills Division brought more staff, better equipment and greater productivity, and in the lean years of the 1930's the income from this division was to prove a useful supplement to the overall revenue of the Bureau.

The department also supervised publication of the *Canadian National Pictorial*, a weekly news magazine made up of Canadian and English news events with a section devoted to Canadian industry. Many of the illustrations were provided by the Stills Division.

During this period the philosophy of the department and the operational procedure of the Bureau became more clearly defined. In answer to an inquiry in 1924, O'Hara issued the following statement:

The Bureau was established for the purpose of advertising abroad Canada's scenic attractions, agricultural resources and industrial development.

The Bureau also distributes still pictures to magazines, and other illustrated papers in various parts of the world to accompany articles on Canada.

Another purpose of the establishment of the Bureau is the distribution of Canadian pictures in Canada, as they afford a valuable educational medium by which one part of Canada is enabled to know the other. (Public Archives RG20 162 26708c, Vol. 1, 19 May 1924)

In practice the Bureau produced some original films, but also reacted to requests from other government departments. The films were made in 35 mm, often tinted or toned to make them more attractive, and issued with integrated titles. Some educational films contained no titles but were accompanied by an official lecturer. The mainstay of the Bureau's production was the *Seeing Canada* series, a number of highly successful one-reelers extolling the nation's scenic attractions and industrial capacity from sea to sea.

These were shown overseas with great success, but as with most other Bureau films, few attempts were made to translate and reprint the titles. However, being silent, it was always possible to make explanatory comments voice over during projection. Of more serious consequence was the almost total absence of alternative French titles for the home market.

The distribution of films fell into two categories, theatrical and non-theatrical, depending upon whether the films were shown in cinemas on a commercial circuit or were screened without admission charge in schools, churches and other informal meeting places. Despite the accusations of the Department of Agriculture, by 1924 the Bureau was offering safety-base film for display where licensed operators and fireproof projectors were not available. Although the film gauge is not specified, the *Annual Reports* refer to prints of nineteen subjects available on narrow-width, non-flammable stock, distributed for non-theatrical showings by the Pathescope Company of Canada. Since Pathescope release prints of the time were all on 28 mm, it is highly probable that these Bureau films were that gauge also. Films for non-theatrical use were generally distributed in Canada through government institutions at a nominal rental. The Bureau was responsible for the physical condition of the films and replaced them as necessary. The rural population of Canada was small and widespread, and often suitable exhibition halls were not available. However, much of the settlement had taken place within reach of the railroad lines and in 1922-23 films were made available to people in outlying areas in specially equipped cinema-coaches supplied by the Canadian National Railway System. Overseas non-theatrical distribution was arranged by trade commissioners, consuls and other interested parties, such as shipping and railroad companies and travel agents. They drew from a stock of prints housed centrally, usually at the Trade Commission. Again, no admission was charged and the film rental fee was nominal.

Where films were shown theatrically, the practice was to arrange contracts with local film distributors. Although contracts varied, the usual procedure was for the Bureau to supply the distributor with a duplicate negative from which he struck his own prints. All related costs were borne by the distributor and all the net profits from the screening were shared, usually evenly, with the Bureau. Although the duplicate negatives were always supplied in prime condition, the Bureau had no further control over the quality of the print, but the situation was held in check by the fact that the distributor's reputation and profit both depended on his offering the public an acceptable product. However, this system was open to pirating and

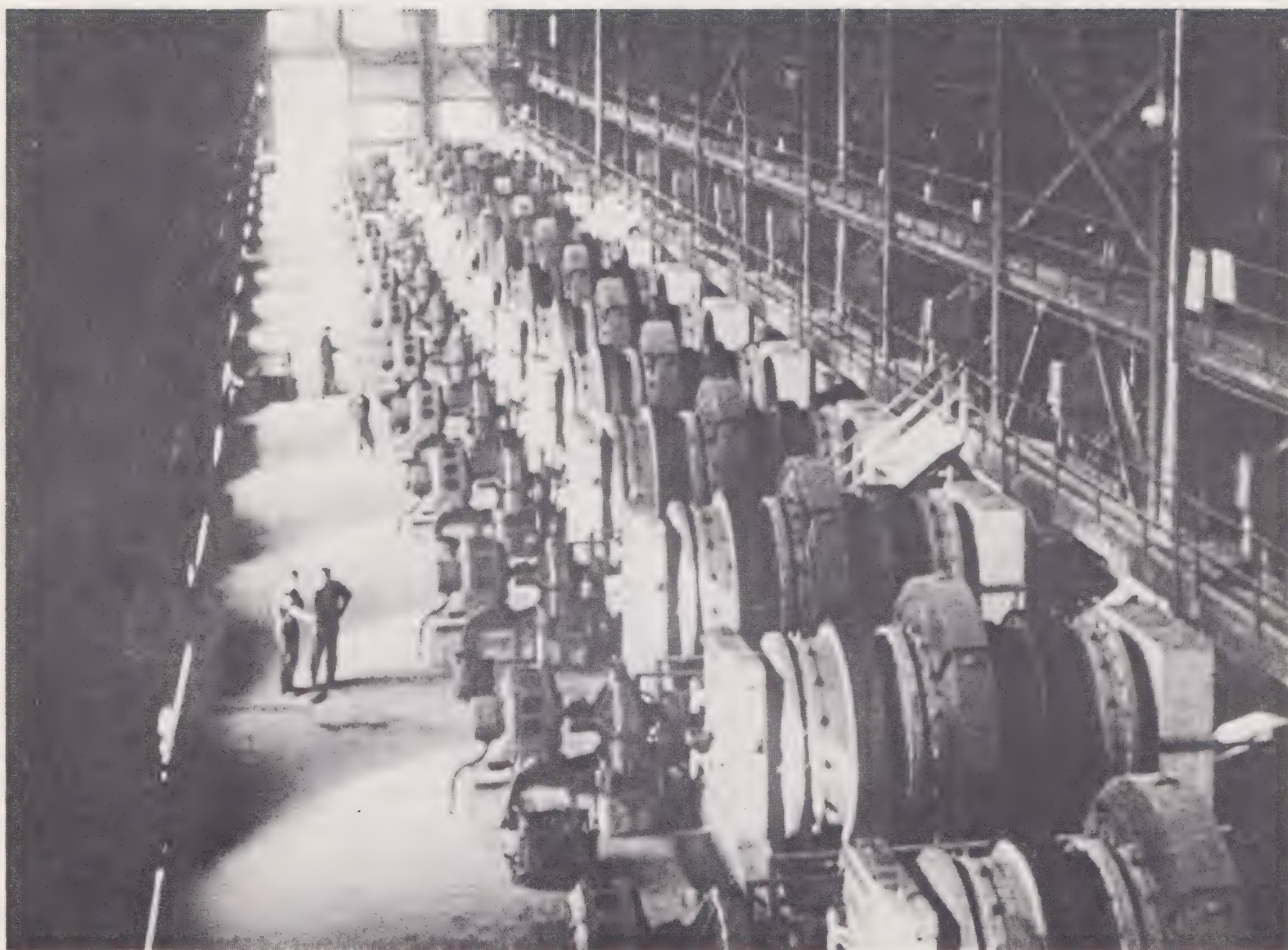
several illegal prints were made in this way.

Arranging non-theatrical distribution posed few problems for admission was free and the screenings were handled by interested parties. Prestige and revenue came from theatrical exhibition, and while the department was primarily interested in publicizing Canada there was much speculation in official circles as to the ultimate possibility of the Bureau becoming financially self-supporting.

Theatrical distribution in Europe was expanded to include Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, but little progress was made in Germany, Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia, due to the political situation in those countries. An initial foray into the West Indies in 1921-22, coinciding with a new trade agreement, had opened up a market throughout the islands, and similar progress was reported from South America where the Max Glucksman company was circulating Canadian films in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. In the Far East, Bureau films were being shown in Japan, China and the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca, and had even gained a foothold in Hawaii with a first showing at the Pan-Pacific Trade Conference held in Honolulu in 1922. Contracts for theatrical showings had been let in all the major countries of the Commonwealth, and the government of Australia announced in 1924 that it intended to establish an official film division patterned on the Motion Picture Bureau. The Department of Trade and Commerce reported many similar inquiries from foreign governments into the structure and operations of the Bureau.

It had long been recognized that the United States with its sizable population and numerous cinemas was the most lucrative market yet untapped. Since the beginning, non-theatrical showings of Canadian films had been attended most enthusiastically. Many sporting goods companies followed the example of the South Bend Bait chain, which insisted upon getting the first delivery of all new fishing films. These would be shown to selected audiences of sportsmen in order to encourage organized fishing expeditions up into Canada, presumably using South Bend Bait equipment. Many of the prominent state universities also screened Canadian government films, but it was not until 1922-23 that the Bureau managed to break into the theatrical market through a contract with Bray Productions Incorporated of New York. Up to this time there had been considerable resistance from the powerful American film industry, and there is a slight taste of sour grapes in O'Hara's comment that the delay was occasioned "owing to the desire of the Bureau to be connected only with a firm of the most reliable character." (*Annual Report*, 1921-22, p. 23)

The Bray Company proved to be an excellent distributor and in 1924 two of the Bureau films, *Unblazed Trails* and *Nipigon Trails*, were accorded Broadway first runs in New York. The company anticipated that these films would be shown in two thousand cinemas throughout the country with an estimated total audience of some 5 - 10 million people. The Minister was delighted by this successful venture into a new area, but expressed some reservations on the manner in which such audience figures were compiled.



The Story of Nickel (1935) One of the Bureau's early sound films and one of the few films depicting industrial development.



Big Timber (1935) Even with sound equipment the Bureau continued its tradition of portraying Canada's natural resources.



The Seasons of Canada (1930) One of the Bureau's few personal films, the film (edited by D.F. Taylor) is a lyrical, sharply edited portrait of Canada throughout the year. It was created entirely in the editing bench using footage shot for other Bureau films.

Although there were to be changes of distributorship from time to time, Canadian government films soon became an established part of the American theatrical circuit, helping to create a flow of revenue, investment and tourists that increased yearly. By 1927, the Bureau had more films circulating in the United States than in any other country, a total of 1,057 prints compared to 150 in Australia, which ranked second.

In reciprocal fashion, although not officially stated as such, the Bureau was encouraged to give full support to American production companies wishing to film in Canada. This worked well with American newsreel units, who thus supplied an extra outlet for Canadian film publicity. Many of the most popular topics, such as the opening of the new Peace Bridge in 1927 or the visit to North America of HRH the Prince of Wales were usually of general international interest rather than specifically Canadian.

Assistance was also offered to American companies wanting to shoot feature films in Canada in the rather naive hope that such films would therefore portray the Canadian scene more accurately. It was also officially noted that these companies were spending large sums of American money in the course of their operations. Although such operations posed no threat to the Bureau or its film production, the government seemed unaware at the time of the need to protect the already unstable local feature film industry. Several trips to Hollywood seem to have convinced Ray Peck that the development of an indigenous feature film industry in Canada was out of the question and that Canada should seek to persuade U.S. producers to make "Canadian-content" films. His attitudes during the Twenties had much to do with official government policy towards the commercial film industry in Canada.

In the private sector there was rising resentment at the domination of American films throughout the British Empire, estimated at controlling 90% of the market. Not only were American studios amazingly prolific but the huge home market allowed them to meet production costs easily before sending their films abroad. These films were then offered at reduced prices that undercut the local market, and circulated through the powerful American distribution companies that operated in almost every country in the world. Many Canadian theaters reacted by holding "All Canadian Weeks" during which time only Canadian productions were screened, but the government showed no inclination to intervene and the American stranglehold on the industry continued.

There was an official change in attitude in 1927 prompted by events in the United Kingdom where the entire British film industry was floundering under the enormous influx of cheap American productions. For years it had been obvious that some form of support was needed and the general consensus was that the government would intervene. Such rumors initially benefitted the Bureau, and as one American trade magazine reported "Talk of the much-discussed film quota plan in the British Isles . . . is causing a boom for the single and two-reel releases of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau." (*Moving Picture World*, 23 January

1923) A few years later, popular demand for programs of double features cut deeply into the market for the shorter Canadian films, and as the situation worsened, the Canadian High Commission in London kept Ottawa well informed with a flow of correspondence and news clippings. For obvious reasons the Canadian government was sympathetic to the British cause, but it was felt within the Bureau that the British film industry had no one but itself to blame. In a letter to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the deputy minister acknowledged that the British seem determined to pass a film quota bill but went on to say,

Personally I feel that when Great Britain is prepared to produce films of exhibition value, there will be no need of a quota, and films will then ride to success throughout the Empire strictly on their own merits. (Public Archives RG20 163 16616, Vol. 1, 24 January 1927)

O'Hara's opinion was based on his experience with the Bureau, but if a film quota was to be established the department wanted to be sure that Canadian films would still be acceptable and there was considerable representation in London intended to persuade the British government to give preferential treatment to Canadian films. One of the conditions of the film quota bill as discussed was that qualifying films must be essentially "British". At the 1926 Imperial Conference in London, while defending the British film industry against that of the United States, Prime Minister Mackenzie King made the Canadian position absolutely clear. "I need only add that I assume that, in any discussion or policy as to production of British films, we mean films produced in any part of the British Commonwealth." (Public Archives RG20 163 16613, Vol. 1 — Mackenzie King stenographic notes, 22 October 1926) King was supported in this by the leaders of other Commonwealth countries, and when the Cinematograph Films Bill became law in January 1928, it contained a clause that allowed production to take place anywhere within the Empire.

The bill in fact had little effect on the British, American or Canadian film industries, being honored in the breach as American companies established small studios in Canada or operated under Canadian ownership titles. The anticipated flood of American money into Canada never materialized, Victoria did not become the Hollywood of the north and no great markets were opened up for Canadian feature films. Apart from a brief flurry of extra bookings until the situation became resolved the theatrical distribution of Bureau films continued to fall off as sophisticated audiences began to demand more than pretty travelogues, no matter how well executed.

Raymond Peck died in May 1927 and his place as director was taken by Captain Frank Badgely who, like Peck, had worked for the Bureau as a film editor.

Although Badgely had risen from the ranks to his present position he actually brought with him a wealth of past experience in film. Commissioned in the Artillery during the First World War, Badgely had been wounded in action and hospitalized. After convalescence, he was posted to lighter duties as a liaison officer supervising the exchange of films and other propaganda between the Canadian government and that of the United States. When the war was over Badgely first moved to New York, where he worked for the Metro Pictures Corporation, and then down

to Hollywood where he played bit parts in several movies, including D. W. Griffith's *Way Down East*. "A handsome brute in uniform" as Archie Shaw recalls (personal interview, September 1972) but his forte was with the technical side of film production, and he worked on several films as technical assistant to David Wark Griffith.

Returning to his birthplace, Ottawa, in 1921, Badgely joined the Motion Picture Bureau and worked under Peck for a number of years. The arrangement was a satisfactory one for all concerned. The Bureau was pleased to get a man of Badgely's experience and obvious potential, and although he worked mainly as a film editor Badgely was pleased to be with the Bureau, then a most desirable place for any young Canadian interested in film.

Throughout the entire twelve years that he was in charge, Badgely always felt short of sufficient money to run the Bureau as he would have liked. Within a few months of taking over as director he urged the minister to increase the financial estimates for the coming year by some thirty percent to cover the cost of new equipment. Most of the equipment in use was obsolete, dating back to the beginning of the Bureau. The cameras in particular had been in constant use in the field for the past decade and were barely operational. They also lacked a number of modern features, as Badgely knew from his Hollywood experience.

O'Hara was away for most of the year on an extensive trade tour of South America, and his place in Ottawa was taken by the assistant deputy minister Major J. G. Parmelee. Fortunately Parmelee and Badgely were old friends, both dedicated to the cause of the Bureau, and with this support a further \$15,000 was made available, one of the last significant sums for many years to come.

The time was also appropriate for a corresponding overhaul of the philosophy behind the production of Bureau films, but Badgely was primarily a technical man and the Bureau continued to produce films in a style that was rapidly becoming dated. Where other producers were thinking in terms of documentary films the Bureau maintained its tradition of simply structured, well photographed travelogues or lightweight storylines that linked a montage of hunting or fishing scenes. There were very few films designed to promote Canadian industry, despite the original mandate of the department. As Badgely explained, "Canada's tourist trade in recent years had had a tremendous development and is now classed as the fourth industry of the Dominion." (*The Film Daily Yearbook*, 1928, p. 27.)

Tourism was booming and if tourists, especially American tourists, wanted to see quaint little villages or the glories of Canada's parks, streams and wildlife the Bureau was only too willing to supply them with a preview on film. This effort to encourage tourism was not in itself bad, and was in fact part of the duties of the Bureau, but the concentration on this type of film to the virtual exclusion of all others was a weakness that should have been checked. The situation became so obvious that John Grierson was later to recall a friend's opinion of Canadian film, given to him on the eve of an earlier visit to Canada in 1931.

If life in the Dominion is as these films represent, we might expect Canadians to engage only in fishing, golf and the observation of wild animals.

There are practically no industries, very little work and no working people.
(*Ottawa Citizen*, 4 June 1938)

As a comment on the pace of development at that time, it is interesting to note that the CPR was among the most active in commissioning and distributing films to promote tourism. A bare thirty years before, the CPR had been using films to attract settlers to many of the same areas that were now being described as tourist havens.

Major Parmelee, the acting deputy minister of Trade and Commerce, spent the summer of 1928 in Britain, and as a result of his visit the entire distribution system for non-theatrical films in the United Kingdom was reorganized. The number of agents handling the popular Canadian films had grown rapidly over the years to the point where inefficiency and lack of co-ordination were robbing Canadian publicity of much of its value. Little attention had been paid to the physical maintenance of the films and many were being circulated in poor condition. Under the new system all Bureau films were to be kept on deposit at the Empire Marketing Board in London, where facilities existed for regular inspection, cleaning and repair. All inquiries and requests for films were to be centralized through Canada House, which would also act in joint agreement with the Board regarding distribution. When the Empire Marketing Board went out of existence a few years later the same functions were assumed by the Imperial Institute, also located in London.

Some years later, Parmelee stated that the result of this centralized depository was a 200% improvement in non-theatrical circulation (Public Archives RG20 B1 200 28574, 15 October 1937) but the situation was still confused by the number of films also being circulated on behalf of such departments as the National Parks Bureau, the Mines Branch and the National Museum. These were not Bureau films and so were beyond the control of the Department of Trade and Commerce. According to Badgely they were often of poor technical quality to begin with and deteriorated badly on the circuits. He claimed that the public overseas was generally unaware that such films were not Bureau products and tended to regard all Canadian films as coming from the same source, and so the showing of such inferior films reflected badly on the superior work of the Bureau. However, Badgely was nothing if not partisan and it is evident from films now lodged in various archives that the Parks Department releases were of comparable quality, and in some cases superior to Bureau productions of the time. Badgely also ignores the fact that during his term as director the Bureau actually released several of the Parks Department films under its own name, a sure indication that the quality was acceptable and to Bureau standards.

No matter where the truth lay, such divergences of opinion only added to the confusion and underlined the necessity of some form of centralisation to control the distribution of Canadian publicity overseas.

In Ottawa too there was another challenge to the Bureau's supposed monopoly on government film productions. In 1926, encouraged by the actions of other departments the Royal Canadian Air Force began to expand its own photographic

unit, including the purchase of moving picture cameras a year later. The RCAF unit was located in very close proximity to the Bureau, which further excited the resentment of Badgely and his staff. To the claims of the RCAF that its film work was highly esoteric Badgely replied that not only was such duplication a waste but the equipment purchased was ill-chosen and inappropriate. The camera used for basic stills work in the studio, said Badgely, was a sophisticated piece of equipment designed specifically and expensively for use from aircraft in flight. In short "the only logical course seems to be the transfer of the whole equipment to the (Bureau) in the Department of Trade and Commerce." (Historical Section 61, 14 December 1928) No action was taken to follow Badgely's advice, and probably rightly so, for despite the sincerity of the Bureau in seeking to coordinate government film activities and so reduce expenses there were some areas of specialized work that simply had to be handled by the staff of that particular department. Had the Air Force unit demonstrated a capacity to purchase and utilize their equipment to good effect, it is probable that Badgely's condemnation would have been less harsh.

Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, the Bureau continued its now customary expansion of distribution, notably in Italy where a contract was negotiated for both theatrical and non-theatrical showings through the government sponsored film agency LUCE. Revenue was up at more than \$25,000, but the *Annual Report* for the fiscal year 1928-29 ended on a somber note.

The introduction and extraordinary growth in popularity of "sound" films throughout the world, and particularly in English-speaking countries, presents a serious problem for the Bureau. It is the general opinion in the motion picture industry that, in the English-speaking countries at least, "sound" films will almost entirely supercede silent productions in the course of the next year. Advices from distribution agencies indicate that, by the end of the current fiscal year, more than 75% of the theaters in Canada, Great Britain, Australia and the United States will be equipped for the exhibition of "sound" pictures, and that there will be no market for the silent product in those territories.

The Bureau has been apprised of the fact that distributors are unable to secure bookings to any extent for its products and already there has been a marked falling-off in the exhibitions. The indications are that, unless the Bureau meets the demand of the markets for sound films by undertaking their production, it will lose the bulk of its theatrical distribution. Since this is the chief source of the Bureau's revenue, as well as probably its most important channel for the dissemination of national information, the question of synchronizing the Bureau's films is one of extreme importance. (*Annual Report*, 1928-29, p. 39)

Although the *Annual Report* was published under the name of the deputy minister, he in turn received his information from the various heads of divisions. There is little doubt that the passage on sound films quoted above came directly from Badgely, since it exactly mirrors his thinking. As with everyone else involved he was acutely aware of the sweeping changes the advent of sound would bring to the film industry, and he pressed the department constantly for enough money to upgrade the Bureau and keep its products competitive.

For Badgely however, the timing was unfortunate. Over the past few years

the Bureau had spent considerable sums of money on new cameras and the renovation of laboratory facilities. The Stills Division had been expanded and re-equipped and the entire Motion Picture Bureau was about to move to larger and more modern quarters in one of the National Research Council buildings. The new sub-standard 16 mm film was becoming popular for non-theatrical purposes and since such showings represented a sizable part of the Bureau's circulation there were plans to install 16 mm reduction equipment in the new building. All of these developments, necessary though they were, had caused the department extra expense and increasing difficulty in getting financial estimates approved. Now, in 1929, the world was moving towards a state of economic depression and there was little hope that the House could be persuaded to look with favor on requests for further expenditure.

But if money was in short supply there was a healthy amount of optimism. A report on the Bureau in one Canadian newspaper predicted "sound pictures will soon be telling the world about Canadian life and Canadian industry," (*Ottawa Journal*, 25 October 1929) and a year later Badgely himself wrote an article for a trade magazine in which he said quite flatly that "in pace with development in the commercial industry, the Bureau during 1930 will produce sound films." (*Film Daily Yearbook*, 1930, p. 94)

In private, the lack of sound equipment was causing the department serious concern. In a letter to the minister, O'Hara made the situation clear.

Last year revenues began to fall owing to the fact that Motion Picture theatres all over the world are demanding "sound" films as distinct from "silent" films. Our Bureau is not equipped to produce them. (*Historical Section* 61, 1 December 1930)

He passed on Badgely's estimate of \$50,000 spread over the next two years, and warned that the alternative was to send Bureau films to the United States for dubbing at the prohibitive cost of \$1200 per reel. Despite the recommendation of the minister the House refused any increase, and the estimates for 1930-31 remained the same as for the previous fiscal year. Unable to hire any new people, Badgely was hard pressed to keep the expanded Bureau functioning with his small staff, and complained that the new 16 mm equipment was running at only a quarter of its true capacity. The Bureau films were still shot in 35 mm, but were reduced to 16 mm prints when required. Although this meant that no additional cameramen were needed an extra load was placed on the laboratory personnel. All 16 mm stock was flameproof, making it popular for non-theatrical screenings, and although purists claimed that the base was not aesthetically stable the reduction from 35 mm helped keep the picture quality sharp and acceptable.

Revenue actually climbed in 1930-31, due to a number of factors, including the extraordinary popularity of 16 mm film. Despite Badgely's problems the Bureau processed more than a quarter of a million feet of 16 mm film in the second year of operation, but apart from production costs there was little financial return to be made from it, since it was mainly used for non-theatrical showings.

Sound film was expensive to produce and so was mostly shown theatrical-

ly where paying audiences helped to recoup the considerable cost to the film companies. Because of this sound films had made few inroads into the educational and other non-theatrical fields, and the Bureau continued to expand in these areas. One innovation was the showing of Bureau travelogues at sea on board some of the world's largest liners, including those of Canadian Pacific, Cunard, White Star and North German-Lloyd.

A considerable boost in theatrical bookings resulted from the restrictive film quota bills passed by many Commonwealth countries in accordance with the United Kingdom, but as with the British bill, the loopholes were many and the benefits short-lived. A reorganization of distribution in the Scandinavian countries pushed up earnings in that area, but in other parts of Europe and in the USA theatrical bookings continued to plummet. On the brighter side, demands on the Stills Division had increased beyond all expectations, reflecting the world-wide popularity of newspapers and illustrated magazines. From a once humble adjunct of the Bureau, Stills had now grown to a division more than capable of earning its share of revenue, and indeed was to help prop up the failing Bureau for many years to come.

But the writing was on the wall and the brief upswing in Bureau earnings during 1930 failed to deceive anyone, especially Badgely, who knew that if the Bureau was to remain at all competitive he must purchase sound equipment and begin the production and circulation of sound films.

Badgely was a hard-working man, somewhat unimaginative, but dedicated to the Bureau and capable of commanding great loyalty from his staff. He took office when the future of the Bureau looked very bright, with protection in the British market, good representation in the United States and booming sales elsewhere. Almost every department of government was making use of the photographic facilities and the name of the Bureau was held in high esteem at home and abroad. Yet Badgely's tenure of duty was to be fraught with difficulties not of his making, and totally beyond his power to control. The Bureau, born at the end of one war was to cease to function at the beginning of another, and it was to fall to Badgely's lot to preside over the demise.

CHAPTER III

THE DECLINE 1931-1939

Vers la fin des années 30, les effets de la crise économique n'étaient pas encore résorbés.

*(Le Cinéma Canadien,
1968, p. 19)*

Much of the history of the Bureau in the early 1930's is reflected in the financial statements for those years. (See Appendix D) Estimates, or the amount of money annually made available to the Bureau, continued to shrink as the Canadian government struggled through the depression. From \$75,000 in 1930-31 the vote dropped to \$65,000 in 1931-32 and further still to \$45,000 in 1932-33. Throughout this period Badgely continued his desperate pleas for money to buy sound equipment, his letters characterized by a justifiable pessimism. In 1931 he sent some preliminary information regarding estimates to the minister, and concluded with the prediction that "further postponement of the purchase of this (sound equipment) . . . will decrease the potential value of the Bureau's work and activities." (Historical Section 163, circa December 1931) While acknowledging the straitened condition of government finances, Badgely insisted that the increased revenue to be gained from sound films would repay the cost of such equipment within three years. To reinforce this claim he offered figures that showed that in the last fifteen months other government departments had spent in excess of \$15,000 to have sound films produced outside by commercial film companies. According to Badgely the commercial rate for synchronizing sound to pictures was \$800-\$1,000 per reel, compared to an estimated \$250-\$400 by the Bureau, if it were to be suitably equipped. In an attempt to sweeten the pill Badgely also offered the prospect of films dubbed into foreign languages and so better tailored to specific markets, but his plea in this regard lacks credibility for the Bureau had steadfastly ignored re-dubbing films for foreign audiences, even in the days when it would have entailed only the addition of a few printed titles.

As a practical man Badgely knew that the mere purchase of sound equipment would not be an automatic panacea for the problems that beset the Bureau, but would in some ways add to them. Extra personnel might be needed to run the sound equipment, and Badgely was aware that the move into 16 mm production had already created a strain on his present staff. Sound men would be needed to accompany cameramen in the field, or at least to perform similar duties in the studio, grips and extra electricians would have to be employed and editing procedures would become much more complicated and time consuming. Complete scripts would be needed to carry the story-line instead of a few condensed titles, and the whole business of music meant paying performers, commissioning scores and arranging for copyright. Even the need for sound effects meant more time, more person-

nel, more money. One imponderable was the amount of waste recording sound might bring in its train, time consumed in setting microphones and hiding cables, time and stock wasted on poor takes and flubbed lines, and problems with the synchronizing process.

Unable to lead the Bureau forward into a new era of film-making, powerless to protect dwindling markets overseas and handicapped by lack of staff, Badgely coldly replied to the request of the department's chief accountant, H. B. Borbridge, that the Bureau make further economies.

In general I would point out that the staff of the Bureau is barely sufficient to carry out the work of the Bureau efficiently, and in fact due to cuts in our establishment made at the beginning of this fiscal year it has been necessary to double up the duties of practically every employee on our staff. (Public Archives, RG20 163 26708c, Vol. 1, 13 December 1932)

Some departments could still find enough money to have films made outside, a practice that Badgely deplored, but in general the government was operating under the most severe economic strictures. Because of restrictions on spending the demand on the Bureau from other departments slackened appreciably during the early 1930's, lessening income but giving the hard pressed staff a welcome respite. The Bureau estimated that 16 mm film cost 25% less to produce than similar 35 mm film, and since almost all non-theatrical showings used the smaller gauge film this represented a considerable saving. However the Bureau usually recovered little more than production costs from non-theatrical showings, and 16 mm film remained more a means of publicity than a revenue producer. The same was true of the cruise of the SS New Northland, commissioned by the department in 1931 as a floating trade exhibition touring the West Indies. In addition to the usual exhibits of machinery and trade goods the New Northland was equipped with a complete cinema, and gave regular showings of Bureau films at each port of call. The cruise cost the department a considerable sum, and there is little doubt that the resultant publicity for Canada, although less tangible, was equally great, but Badgely for one could have found another use for the money.

In 1932, for the first time in the history of the Bureau, production of films was down. It had been a bad year economically for all of Canada, and many cinemas had closed owing to a lack of patrons. Demands on the Bureau had lessened and although the staff was still loyal to Badgely and his ideals, many of them were becoming demoralized. Not only were their personal affairs suffering from the depression, but they also knew that despite their best efforts the work they were engaged in was technically outdated, and destined for low prestige, low revenue showings only. Archie Shaw (personal interview, September 1972) recalls that he and Badgely tried to practice small economies and to place any savings in a special fund for the purchase of sound equipment, but the task was beyond the scope of petty cash savings. The staff was aware of the special fund however, and the whole exercise became a design in group psychology.

The one bright spot in an otherwise dark year was the coverage the Bureau

gave to the Imperial Economic Conference held in Ottawa. Badgely was made responsible for co-ordinating all still photographs and films released to the press and newsreels, and was instructed to produce a complete pictorial record of the conference.

The seven reels of film finally produced were collectively titled, somewhat unimaginatively, *Canada, From Coast to Coast*. They were well received, giving the staff of the Motion Picture Bureau a much needed boost in morale. Although pleased with the results, Badgely expressed considerable displeasure with the contribution of Associated Screen News. ASN was a Canadian company based in Montreal producing newsreels, sponsored films and theatrical short films. It was headed by Ben Norrish, former director of the Motion Picture Bureau in its early years. Newsreel work was the lifeblood of ASN as it was of other Canadian companies such as Canadian Sound News of Toronto. These companies felt that the much larger American newsreel companies were taking work away from them by sending their own units across the border to shoot Canadian footage for their newsreels (an Ontario government regulation required that all newsreels shown in the province have at least 40% Canadian or British content). Spearheaded by Norrish, these Canadian companies successfully lobbied the Federal government into introducing a restrictive tariff on foreign newsreel equipment crossing the border, thereby forcing American companies into buying such footage as they required from Canadian producers. Associated Screen News received commissions for most of this work but even they were not large enough to cope adequately with the 40% Canadian and British content quota in Ontario. Badgely felt that Canadian film publicity in the USA was not being done justice by the arrangement. His view may have been distorted somewhat by professional considerations but, in any case, the Mackenzie King government rescinded the tariff a few years later.

Badgely's persistent demands for more money were finally answered in 1933 when the estimate for the fiscal year was dramatically increased to \$70,000. Complete field and studio sound equipment was ordered immediately and installed in 1934, but elation at this development was tempered in some quarters by the fact that it had come six years too late, as Marsolais so rightly observes. (*Le Cinéma Canadien*, p. 19)

The staff of the Bureau was jubilant, even though numbers were down and the amount of money available for salaries the lowest since 1930. Archie Shaw recalls that the first two sound men were the Bureau projectionists, hastily trained and redesignated (personal interview, September 1972), and with renewed enthusiasm the Bureau began the mammoth task of preparing its first major sound production, an epic ten reel film history of the Canadian armed forces in World War I. Entitled *Lest We Forget* the film was produced by the Bureau, but with considerable help in research and scripting from a committee appointed by the Ministry of National Defence. Sequences were taken from the material Beaverbrook had stored in the Imperial War Museum, and purchases or loans of other wartime footage were negotiated with foreign governments, newsreel companies and film production

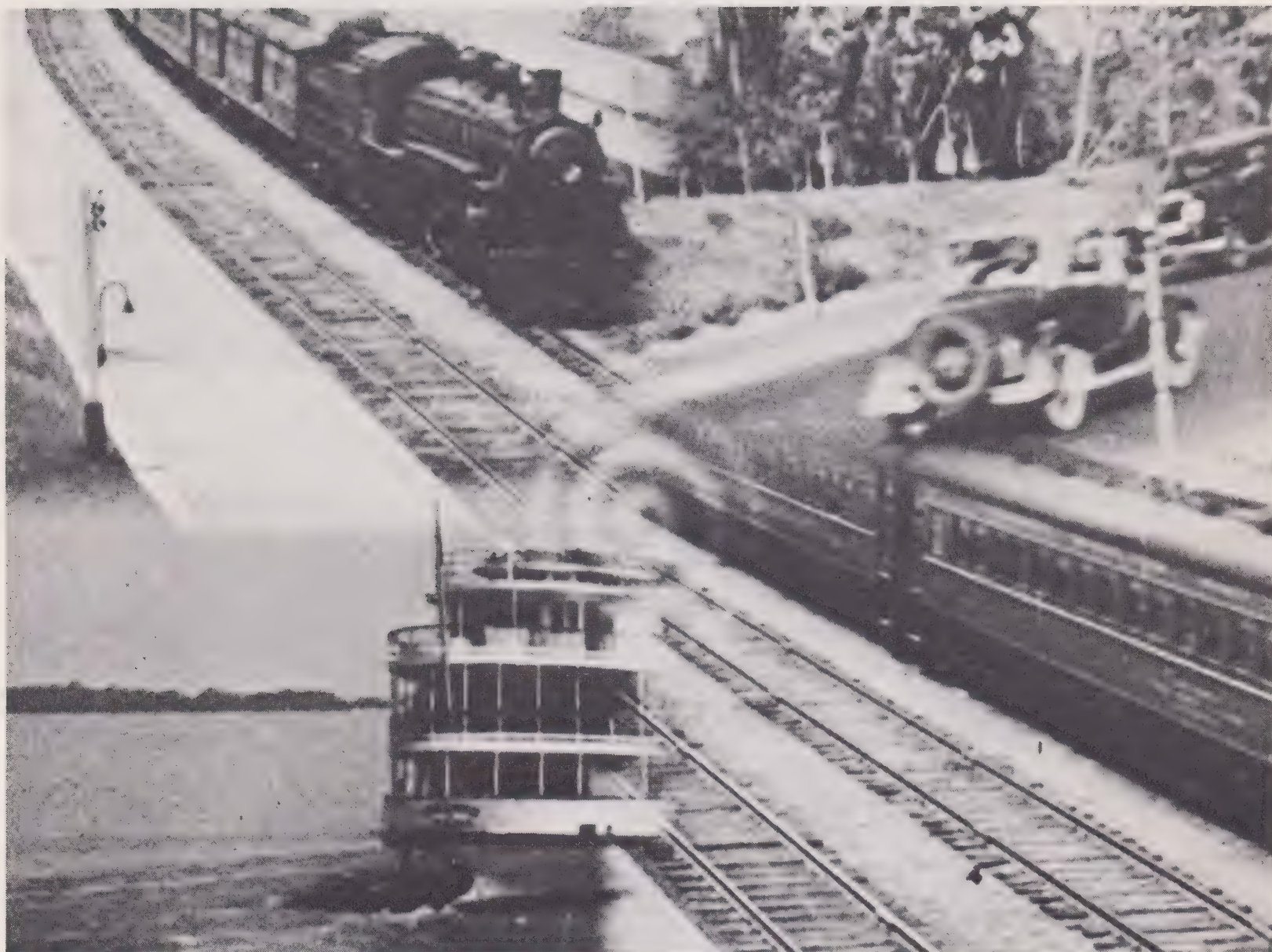
*“Merry, laughing, dancing, rushing,
Like a child set free at playtime
Leaps the Bow in green and silver
Making music, night and daytime.”*

**BOW RIVER,
BANFF NATIONAL PARK
ALBERTA**

Falling Waters (1928) The Bureau's titles tended to be somewhat pretentious but the series of pseudo-poetic titles written by T.B. Williams for this film have never been equalled.



The Royal Visit (1939) The Bureau's feature length documentary on the Royal tour of 1939.



Canada's Queen City (1929) A travelogue on Toronto. Such visual effects as split screen were unusual in the Bureau's films.

houses throughout the world. A total of some two million feet of film was collected and finally reduced to ten reels, with a running time of an hour and a half. *Lest We Forget* was given an enthusiastic reception wherever it played at home and abroad. As a measure of the national importance of both theme and medium, when the film was released in Ottawa in 1935 Sir George Perley, speaker of the House of Parliament, adjourned that august body early in order that members might attend the gala showing. (*Ottawa Journal*, 5 March 1935) Psychologically the production served a number of purposes, not the least of which was to show the world what the newly equipped Bureau could do, and to give a much needed lift to the morale of the staff.

As if rejuvenated the Bureau did indeed move into previously unexploited fields, and developed a series of educational and training films specifically designed for use at camps for the unemployed located throughout Canada. Thousands of the men in these camps had been without work for years, despite their best efforts. This novel use of film as an approach to their problems carried with it an implication of deeper concern by the government, and this did much to counter the despondency that naturally existed in such camps. Previous Bureau films had rarely been directed at specific problems, partly because the leisurely pace of production meant that even matters of seasonal concern were often resolved before the films were ready for exhibition.

It is regrettable that this new sense of mission was not further developed, but the financial support that so often allows for creativity was not forthcoming and with the exception of salaries the estimates were allowed to stagnate, even showing a slight decrease from 1935 to 1938. Now more than at any previous time the Bureau suffered from the lack of a vibrant commercial film industry, a sister industry from which it might have drawn renewed vitality, but the many years of government disregard and the formidable presence of the United States had seriously hampered any Canadian development in this field. With no new blood to bring ideas into the unit and with little time available for experimentation, the creative staff of the Bureau settled down almost doggedly to the task of turning out films in response to events and at the request of other departments. Over the years there were some notable exceptions but in general Bureau productions continued to portray the same golden wheatfields, the same leaping salmon and tumbling waterfalls as in pre-sound days, except that now they were accompanied by spoken dialogue and music.

As the country began to recover from the depression and money became available there was a resurgence of orders from other departments. Where once Badgely had insisted on the right to process all such work he now found his small staff swamped with orders, often merely for developing and printing negative film already shot by non-Bureau cameramen. The mounting pressure of such work and the extra manhours required to produce sound films further stifled creativity within the Bureau, and under a backlog of requests for laboratory services the cameramen/technicians began to spend less and less time in the field.

Once again in 1936 a special production highlighted the Bureau's annual output. As before the theme was a military one, this time the story of the dedication of the Canadian National Memorial at Vimy Ridge in France, where thousands of Canadian troops had been killed in a bloody but successful encounter in 1917. The film, *Salute to Valour*, was an hour-long, sound production that recorded the unveiling of the memorial, the speeches of the assembled international dignitaries and the pilgrimage to the nearby cemetery by thousands of visiting families and veterans. Although the film was not without some historical significance the attention of the public and the press was caught by the progression of events that occurred during production. As head of the Commonwealth, King Edward VIII played a leading role in the ceremonies and thus in the film. It was a situation in which his regal presence and natural charm combined to form a most favorable impression, and the Bureau was delighted with the many reels of excellent footage that resulted. However, in December 1936, while editing was still in progress, King Edward abdicated the throne, throwing the Canadian government into a state of confusion on a point of protocol. Given the reasons for the abdication, was it still possible to associate the image of the Duke of Windsor with such highly charged emotional circumstances as the Vimy dedication? Taking into account the obvious impossibility of re-shooting the dedication scenes the issue was finally resolved on practical grounds, and the film was edited as planned. As the Prince of Wales, Edward had visited Canada in 1919, and had proved to be the darling of the Canadian press. Over the years he had remained popular, and when *Salute to Valour* was released in 1937, he was critically acclaimed for his "fine acting and irresistible personality." (*Montreal Standard*, 6 March 1937).

The film was given a mixed reception in the United Kingdom, where the climate for Canadian films had grown appreciably cooler. The ten year old film quota bill was about to go before the British House again, and there was some concern that proposed amendments to the bill would not be advantageous to Canada. The 1928 bill had failed in its purpose, and the British film industry was still in the doldrums. Some hostility was directed at the number of cheaply produced Canadian feature films that nonetheless gained exhibition because they met quota requirements, but the major cause of resentment was the specious way in which the Canadian government had allowed American film companies to operate from Canadian locations, thus defeating the principal aims of the quota. Any restrictions placed by the United Kingdom on the import of American-financed "Canadian" films would also apply to the products of the genuinely Canadian industry, and the department was bombarded with representations from the High Commission in London and from the local industry at home. In addition to the furore over the quota bill, distribution of Canadian films in Britain had again become disorganized to the point that deputy minister Parmelee felt obliged to visit London to appraise the situation at first hand, as he had done a decade before.

Parmelee had taken over as deputy minister following O'Hara's retirement in 1931. O'Hara had served in that position for almost thirty years, but Parmelee

proved to be an excellent replacement. His visit to London lasted several weeks, and on his return to Ottawa he issued a report that deplored the multitude of outlets for Canadian film that existed in the United Kingdom. The overall good impression created by quality Bureau products was being diluted by the circulation of a number of indifferently produced films, made for individual departments of the Canadian government. Many were being shown in poor physical condition due to lack of proper maintenance, and considerable confusion existed about the ownership of what were all loosely referred to as Canadian government films, with the result that many Bureau films were being lost, damaged or pirated. Among other proposals the report suggested the creation of a Publicity and Advertising director operating out of Canada House to coordinate film distribution, but before any action could be taken another report was filed with the government in Ottawa, a document that was to have the most profound effects upon the structure of the Bureau and the future of Canadian film publicity.

The report, dated 18 November 1937, came in the form of a lengthy memo from Canada's High Commissioner in London to the Secretary of State for External Affairs in Ottawa. Although signed by Vincent Massey, the report was in fact the work of Ross MacLean, his private secretary. MacLean was a film enthusiast and spent much of his spare time in London at film societies and select film showings. While attending the small cinema of the famous GPO Film Unit he met John Grierson, the dynamic head of the documentary movement in Britain, and was most impressed by the man and his work. Despite the five hundred prints of Bureau films alone that were in circulation in the United Kingdom, MacLean told Massey that he was "appalled at the paucity of film material on Canada and its lack of appeal." (*History of the NFB*, p. 2) Massey asked him to elaborate further in writing and when MacLean did so the commissioner forwarded the report to Ottawa with his official blessing. MacLean's report agreed with that of Parmelee on the chaos and inefficiency that now existed in the distribution of Canadian films, but MacLean went a step further than the deputy minister and suggested sweeping changes in policy and personnel in London and in Ottawa.

The report was highly critical of the number of poorly produced Canadian films on the market, the same cheap products that had aroused the indignation of the British, and commented primly "circulation of an indifferent film is the worst kind of publicity." (Public Archives, RG20 B1 236 31670, Vol. 1, 18 November 1937) In conclusion the report suggested that an independent and exhaustive survey of Canadian publicity film activities be made immediately. From his experience in London, MacLean knew the very man to conduct such a survey, and Vincent Massey agreed with his suggestion. "There is no one I know who could do this better than Mr. John Grierson, probably the leading documentary film maker in the United Kingdom" he wrote to the Secretary of State. (*Ibid.*) Parmelee and Badgely both supported the idea of an independent investigation, especially by a man of Grierson's proven ability and calibre. They felt sure that he would isolate the same problems they already knew existed, but were powerless to control, and hoped that the

weight of Grierson's recommendations would ensure that the necessary changes would be made.

Since the need for reform was obvious, Grierson was approached late in 1937, and he agreed to the proposal, planning to arrive in Canada the following spring. In Ottawa \$3,000 from the Publicity vote was set aside for his fee and expenses. In the meantime the work of the Bureau continued, and Parmelee went ahead with the formation of the High Commissioner's committee he had proposed to direct the policy of film publicity in Britain. In that country the new Cinematograph Films Bill was passed 24 February 1938, and as predicted it was less favorable to Canada than the bill of 1928 that it replaced. In order to thwart the production of films by foreign nationals locating in Commonwealth countries, a clause was added that required a large proportion of the labor costs to be paid to British or Commonwealth subjects only. Despite dire predictions from the Canadian government it is hard to say what effect the new bill would have had on the Canadian film industry, for the advent of World War II was soon to put an end to such family quarrels.

Grierson arrived in Canada like a thunderbolt in May 1938. In a typical gesture he presented himself in Ottawa before the letter announcing his departure from England had been delivered. For a month Grierson energetically applied himself to the job at hand, interviewing everyone, investigating everything, working at all hours of the day and night and impatient of those who were not willing to do likewise. Working with a speed and concentration that astonished Ottawa, he submitted on the 23 June a sixty page report couched in the stirring prose that was part of the Grierson mystique.

Lacking the euphemisms commonly found in such documents, Grierson's Report on Canadian Government Film Activities was terse and to the point. From the opening statement Grierson pulled no punches. He acknowledged Canada's original initiative in the use of film propaganda, but pointed out that as world interest in documentary and 'prestige' films had grown, Canada had failed to respond and had fallen behind the times. "To a field which has become more and more sophisticated in its requirements, Canada has provided few films since 1931," Grierson said, (*Ibid.*, June 1938, p. 1) and described current bureau output as films still of the departmental type, competent but not dynamic enough to capture markets. The report listed what Grierson saw as the three principal areas of weakness:

1. The absence of a considered directive policy with regard to propaganda for Canada as a whole.
2. The lack of a strong, creative film unit which might carry out that policy and interpret it in imaginative terms.
3. The parochialism of the different departments, and the fact that each department appeared to pursue its own departmental interest, in its own way, without regard to the publicity interest of Canada as a whole.

With complete candor Grierson praised the competence of the Bureau's

technical staff and complimented Badgely on the state of the equipment, but added "the technical capacity of the Bureau is far in excess of its creative capacity."

(*Ibid.*, p. 4) The permanent nature of the staff, he said, bred complacency, and he urged that funds be made available to bring in part-time workers and experts from areas other than government. Above all, outside writers were desperately needed to brighten the Bureau's traditional and by now out-dated scenarios. He recommended a more professional approach by the departments using the services of the Bureau, and said he was astonished to find that 'experts' from such departments often took over the directing and editing of films they had commissioned.

The report noted that considerable waste occurred when departments shot their own film, and as a documentarist Grierson deplored the lost opportunities of such non-professional film making. In particular he mentioned the fiasco of the coverage of the last Arctic expedition, when "the incidental happenings of the voyage seemed to have been gathered up in promiscuous handfuls along the way." (*Ibid.*, p. 17) The old problem of the duplication that resulted from departments sub-contracting film was also discussed, with a specific note of criticism for the National Parks Bureau, whose policy was to give such companies exclusive ownership and distribution rights in return for one print and a few still photographs. "A first need," said Grierson,

is to release [the Bureau] from the inferiority complex to which departmental procedure and discipline have subjected it, and arrange for its development as a powerful instrument of government propaganda policy. (*Ibid.*, p. 19)

But the building of a strong, vibrant and creative Bureau would serve no useful purpose without the formulation of a definite policy on all aspects of government film publicity, and to this end Grierson proposed that a continuing committee be appointed to guide, criticize and review the work of the Bureau. He agreed that these duties could be performed by the newly created High Commissioner's committee, but he further proposed that one man be given the title of Film Commissioner, with the responsibility of ensuring that committee policy was put into effect. For freshness of viewpoint Grierson suggested that the committee be expanded to include some members of the public, preferably from radio and press circles. The committee was to maintain close contact with the Department of Trade and Commerce, but the report strongly urged that the autonomy of the Bureau be respected. Although the planning of films would be the joint responsibility of the committee and the Bureau, Grierson warned against the general nature of current productions and outlined a pattern of development of films in special categories, including travel, industry, educational, and documentary.

In conclusion the report stressed the need for coordination between all phases of policy, production and circulation, and urged that the distribution of all Canadian publicity films be routed through one competent agency.

His mission completed, Grierson returned to London, while Ottawa slowly recovered from his visit and began to digest the contents of the report. Despite the

speed with which he had worked, Grierson had covered the ground fully, and although he had mainly drawn into the open problems already tacitly acknowledged to exist, his proposals for reform were rather more vigorous than most departments had expected.

No action was taken on the report for several months, while the situation continued to deteriorate. Then, in November, under mounting pressure from the Bureau and from such interested parties as the National Film Society (now the Canadian Film Institute), a meeting was convened of representatives from all departments using film for publicity, chaired by the Minister of Trade and Commerce. Despite some reservations it was generally conceded that the proposals contained in Grierson's report were in the best interest of Canadian publicity, and should be implemented as soon as possible.

In order to avoid accusations of departmental favoritism the man to do the job should come from outside of government, and the obvious choice was Grierson. When offered the contract, Grierson immediately accepted and was back in Canada on the 22 November. Two days later he signed an agreement with the Minister of Trade and Commerce in which, for the sum of \$2,250, he was instructed to

develop a plan for the coordination of the film production and distribution activities of Departments of the Dominion Government in accordance with the proposals set out in (your) report on this subject. (*Ibid.*, 24 November 1938)

With characteristic energy, Grierson immediately set up meetings with representatives from all departments to solicit their views and to help solve their problems. He found some departments reluctant to centralize film production through the Bureau, seeing this as an encroachment on their sovereignty. The Parks Department in particular, smarting from Grierson's earlier comments on the poor quality of its films, adamantly demanded concessions, "afraid," as Grierson reported to Parmelee, "that a Commissioner might be appointed who knows nothing about film." (Public Archives RG20 B1 578 TA383, 10 January 1939) Although he was not authorized to make such an appointment, Grierson strongly recommended Badgely for the position of Film Commissioner. Despite his full schedule Grierson somehow found time to hold impromptu discussions with members of the private film industry, who felt that any strengthening of the Bureau would only lessen the meagre amount of film work they now did for the government. Grierson assured them that if the reorganization he proposed really came about, the pressure of work would be so great that there would be plenty for all. True to his word, in 1940 and 1941 Grierson commissioned entire films from the private industry.

Late in November Grierson requested that all ministers submit to him detailed memos of the needs, problems and expectations of their departments, to assist him in preparing the terms of the proposed National Film Board bill. When no answers had been received some two weeks later Grierson impatiently drafted the entire bill by himself, explaining in a brusque letter to Parmelee, "I had per-

force and to save time to go ahead with the drafting of the bill.” (*Ibid.*, 3 January 1939)

Although Grierson was no politician, he was shrewd enough to play the game according to their rules when it suited his purpose. In his report he had commented on the depreciation of the Bureau over the years, and now he insisted that if the Film Board was to have any continuing strength and autonomy it must be created by a bill rather than by the weaker process of an Order in Council. Within three weeks of accepting his assignment Grierson had a draft bill before the startled ministers, awaiting their consideration and criticism. As it progressed through Parliament the subject of the bill was seized on eagerly by the press, and the proposals were discussed heatedly inside and outside the House. However, given the tenor of belligerence in international affairs in 1939, most newspapers echoed the sentiments of the Ottawa newspaper editorial which stated in ringing terms, “Canada should not betray her past (as a leading propagandist) at this juncture in world affairs.” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 23 March 1939)

John Grierson was hard at work in London when the cable from Parmelee arrived. The message said, “Bill passed final reading in House last night without discussion.” (Public Archives RG20 B1 578 TA 383, 17 March 1939).

Although no one was aware of it at the time, the passing of the National Film Act was to be the first step in the dissolution of the Motion Picture Bureau. What seemed at first to be a strengthening process was to prove deceptive, and within two years practical expediency and the pressures of world events were to lead to the absorption of the Bureau into the much more powerful structure of the NFB.

CHAPTER IV

UNDER THE NFB 1939-1941

I look at the cinema as a pulpit, and use it as a propagandist.

Grierson

(History of the NFB, p. 3)

Set up in accordance with the requirements of the bill as an independent advisory committee, the National Film Board at first did not appear to pose any threat to the Bureau, but rather seemed to offer the prospect of consolidation. As planned, the Board would relieve the Bureau of a great deal of purely administrative work and help reduce the friction of inter-departmental rivalries. Freed from these pressures, the staff of the Bureau would thus be given more time and more freedom to devote to creative expression in their own field.

The National Film Board consisted of eight members, with the Minister of Trade and Commerce acting as chairman. The chief executive officer, and only paid member, was the Film Commissioner, whose duties were to implement the recommendations of the committee. Following Grierson's advice three of the remaining six members were chosen from the public sector and helped form a balance with their three colleagues from government. Dr. Walter Murray was the former president of the University of Saskatchewan, Charles Cowan was vice-president of the National Film Society of Canada (CFI), the group that had lobbied in favor of Grierson's original proposals, and the third member was Edward Turcotte, well known former editor of *Le Canada* of Montreal. Representing the government was a senior member of the Department of Agriculture, another from the Department of Transport and the deputy minister of Trade and Commerce, Major Parmelee. An appointed advisory committee chaired by the Film Commissioner and composed of departmental representatives was to direct the policy of a centralized government film distribution and public information service. The Motion Picture Bureau, with Badgely as director, remained under Trade and Commerce, but was to be the depository for all government film distributed by the central service. The Bureau was also to continue its function as a film production unit.

Order in Council PC2419 dated 31 August 1939 named all members of the Board with the exception of the Film Commissioner. The position had been offered to several leading Canadian figures, but since Grierson's report and the ensuing debates there had grown an increased public awareness of the highly specialized nature of the field of international film publicity, and few Canadians felt capable of handling the task. As Canada entered World War II in the fall of 1939, the Board still lacked an executive officer, and it is to the credit of all concerned that no hurried appointment was made, for the position was a sensitive one and the institution of the wrong man may well have done irreparable harm to the cause of government film in Canada. Finally Grierson was asked if he would act temporarily as



Some of the Bureau's facilities;
(bottom) developing tanks.





Bureau cameramen taken about 1925 outside the Exhibits and Publicity Bureau Building. Ray Peck is standing on the steps with the black hat.

Film Commissioner, and with mixed feelings he accepted the position on 16 October 1939.

Grierson was not a man to leave a job half done, and so he was intrigued by the prospect of guiding what was essentially his own creation, the NFB, through its formative months, but in the meantime he had been asked by the Australian government to help plan a similar federal film body in that country, and he was restlessly anxious to come to grips with this new challenge. Equally anxious to get his services the Canadian government agreed that as soon as the NFB was functioning satisfactorily Grierson would be given leave to fulfill his Australian commitment. Finally, with the hostilities in Europe, Grierson felt that he should return to Britain as soon as possible to help with the war effort, but fortunately for Canada the British failed to mobilize their film industry in the early stages of the war and exerted no pressure on Grierson to return.

From the beginning it was naive to suppose that such a driving personality as Grierson would be content to remain in an advisory capacity, and there soon developed a considerable antagonism between the Bureau and the Board, caused in the main by Grierson's high-handed but well-intentioned meddling in areas of film production. On his recommendation a number of part time technicians and eager young writers and directors had been hired, a new breed of film maker whose youth, abundant energy and disturbingly new ideas roused hostility and resentment among the permanent civil servants in the Bureau. The older employees remained fiercely loyal to Badgely, while the younger set admired Grierson and his work, and tended to respond more to him than to Badgely, who was still Bureau director. Ironically, despite the example offered by the Germans and Italians many of the old guard at the Bureau still failed to comprehend the vital importance of film propaganda in modern warfare. Veterans of the previous war, they still thought in outmoded terms, and much of their resentment stemmed from working beside young men who were obviously fit enough to be at the front.

However, despite their differences, old and new members of the Bureau were extremely busy during the first year of operation under the NFB, and although circulation was down due to the war in Europe, the amount of footage produced was the greatest ever. By a fortunate accident of timing the feature-length film of the 1938 royal visit of King George and Queen Elizabeth was released in 1939, when patriotic fervor was at its height. Badgely had been placed in charge of all photographic coverage of the event, including the coordination of newsreel and press releases, and by all accounts had performed his duties with great efficiency. Although nobody knew it at the time, *The Royal Visit* (one copy of which was presented to the Royal couple) was to be Badgely's swan song with the Bureau. The older members of the Bureau felt justifiable pride at the scope of the film and the prestige of its content, and there is evidence of the tension that existed between the Board and the Bureau in the careful wording of the press release on the 22 November 1939, which says, "The National Film Board has just released the Motion Picture Bureau film of the Royal visit. All proceeds to the Red Cross." (Public Archives RG20 B1 578 32123)

In fact, apart from its epic length and its undoubted importance as an historic record, *The Royal Visit* was not a significantly outstanding film. As always the picture quality was technically good, but the theme of the film soon became a dreary repetition of cheering crowds and regal addresses as the Royal couple slowly moved by train across the country. Because of the clumsiness of the sound recording equipment and the lack of long range microphones most of the sound track was added later in the studio, and the quality of the dubbing is often poor, even by pre-war standards. However, the timing of the release was superb, and the effect of the film at home and abroad was extraordinary.

Grierson had brought with him from England a brilliant young assistant named Stuart Legg, and under Legg's direction the Bureau began production of *Canada Carries On*, a war-inspired series of films that was to become world-famous. The films were primarily intended for the home market, designed to keep Canadians informed about the war and to encourage a feeling of pride in Canada's contribution. To accommodate the home market, films were made in both languages, and *Un du 22ième*, released in 1940, was the first in the French series, another positive step by the Bureau under the NFB, for in previous years the Bureau had all but ignored the French fact.

In contrast to previous Bureau training films, Legg also produced two sensitive documentaries, *Youth for Tomorrow* and *The Case of Charlie Gordon*, in response to the official concern with the number of Canadian youths who were untrained and unemployed. Although they embodied a radically different approach to manpower training, it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of these films since the advent of war temporarily solved Canada's unemployment problem. The new Board-inspired attitude of rapid response to selected areas of concern could also be seen in the 1940 release *Four Apple Dishes*, a 16 mm film designed to encourage greater domestic use of the surplus crop Canada had retained due to restrictions on many overseas markets. "A new development, in so far as the Bureau is concerned," (*Annual Report*, 1939-1940, p. 41), this simple film of recipes demonstrated most aptly the alertness of the advisory committee and the dramatic reduction of time lag between film request and implementation.

But such changes were not achieved without cost, and before leaving for Australia, Grierson had already exceeded his authority in a number of areas in his impatient attempts to cut through red tape and to bypass accepted but time-consuming procedures. In December 1939, Badgely complained to the deputy minister that Grierson was moving beyond his advisory capacity and was in fact hiring staff for the Bureau without consulting the director. Parmelee's main concern was the smooth running of both units, and by masterful diplomacy he was able to mediate between the impetuous Grierson and the slow but dependable Badgely. However, on Grierson's return from Australia a far more serious situation arose as he clashed with other government officials outside the department. The search for a successor to take Grierson's place as Film Commissioner had continued without success, and his contract was being renewed on a monthly basis. The relationship

between the Board and the Bureau had worsened, and the ranks of the Bureau were even more divided in their loyalties.

Trying to do the best he could for his staff while still Film Commissioner, Grierson blithely requested an increase in salary for Legg, in recognition of the fine work he was doing. The Treasury Board was not amused by Grierson's informal correspondence, and in a chilly letter to the Minister of Trade and Commerce, the Comptroller complained, "There is some doubt as to whom we should look to as responsible officer, or officers, of the Department of Trade and Commerce in dealing with matters pertaining to the National Film Act." (Public Archives RG20 B1 578 32123, 15 November 1940)

Despite all his efforts to ensure that the board would remain autonomous, Grierson was alarmed at the growing tendency of other departments to regard it more and more as an adjunct of Trade and Commerce. Always flexible in his thinking, Grierson was now prepared to abandon his original concept of a separate advisory board and production unit, and suggested as early as June 1940 that the Board and the Bureau be drawn together to form one complete body. The urgency of wartime production, he argued, meant that the leisurely pace of development he had at first suggested should be scrapped in favor of a more dynamic merger, but no action was taken on his recommendation at that time. In May 1941, Grierson announced that he would not renew his contract as Film Commissioner past August of that year, and again suggested that for the good of Canadian film publicity the Board should take over control of the Bureau. This time a vote was held, and a split decision emerged with the three government members opposed to the motion and the three members from the public in favor. The chairman voted with the outside members, and on the 11 June 1941, Order in Council PC3549 made the decision official, transferring the control and supervision of the Motion Picture Bureau from the Department of Trade and Commerce to the National Film Board.

The Stills Division was exempted from the transfer, and the directorship of this division was offered to the mortified Badgely. Although the Stills Division had grown enormously in size and prestige since the 1920's, the position as director would still have been a demotion for Badgely, who quite justifiably felt that he deserved better after the many years of leadership he had given the Bureau. He refused the offer indignantly and transferred to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a bitterly disappointed man.

The cavalier treatment meted out to Badgely further inflamed the resentment many of the older members of the Bureau felt towards Grierson and the Board, but most of them accepted the transfer to protect pension plans, to retain seniority and to continue performing the duties they knew best. In any case the conditions of the transfer were modified even before it took place, for under another Order in Council PC4215 of the same date, all powers, duties and functions relating to government film publicity, including the NFB, came under the immediate control of the Minister of National War Services for the duration of hostilities. The Stills Division was transferred to the same ministry a month later by Order in

Council PC6047 dated 8 August 1941.

Surprisingly enough, the last year had not been unfruitful, as Marjorie McKay recalls in her work on the origins of the NFB:

Despite the constant irritations and frustrations, the Board and the Bureau had, during the years 1940-41, produced almost forty films, many of them in French; several short clips to promote war savings; provided material for newsreels; distributed the *Canada Carries On* series to nearly seven hundred theatres in Canada; contracted for theatrical distribution of the series, and other films, in the Far East; increased theatrical distribution in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America; and undertaken a complete overhaul of the distribution of films outside the theatres. (*History of the NFB*, p. 25)

By the end of the summer of 1941, all the various transfers had been effected, and the title of Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau had ceased to exist. It was the end of an era, the close of the first long chapter in the history of Canadian government film activities. The Board remained a part of National War Services for several years, and emerged again at the end of the war as a strong and independent National Film Board, but its association with Trade and Commerce ended in 1941; when the exigencies of war made it desirable to unite all forms of government propaganda under one agency.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Alphonse Karr,
Les Guêpes

The passing of the old Motion Picture Bureau was not entirely without regret, but most of it was based on emotional grounds rather than practical considerations. Some of the people concerned followed Badgely's example and either moved to other departments or left government employ completely. Others had no alternative but to accept the transfer to the National Film Board, where they were old men in what had suddenly become a young man's domain, holding to out-dated values and ideas while the rest of the department moved swiftly forward into a more sophisticated world of propaganda and publicity.

By the late 1930's it had become obvious that the Bureau must adapt to changing conditions, and if it had not been suggested by Grierson it would have been demanded by the exacting conditions of the new style of warfare in which Canada was soon to become embroiled. But even if change was inevitable, it is regrettable that it would have been accompanied by such bitterness and resentment. It is also a pity that in some quarters Grierson was personally blamed for the decision of the Board to drop Badgely. Despite their several differences Grierson was not strongly opposed to Badgely as director, and had in fact suggested him for the position of the first Film Commissioner. Given their respective personalities the two men found it difficult to work in complete harmony, but the strongest public observation Grierson made of Badgely was that he was "technically sound, but slow." (Public Archives, RG20 B1 578 TA388, 3 February 1939) Had the Bureau never existed there is every possibility that Canada would still have emerged from World War II with a film body structured along the lines of the NFB. However, the previous existence of the Bureau did prove to be of benefit to the Board in many intangible ways, much as 'goodwill' is often transferred when businesses change hands.

After all, the Bureau had pioneered the field of government film publicity when the cinema itself was still a young institution. Aided by the all-encompassing chain of Commonwealth Trade Commissions, the Bureau had soon made Canadian publicity films the most widely circulated and effective of any nation in the world. Over the years the Motion Picture Bureau was fortunate in having men of extraordinary calibre to guide its progress, and of these none made a greater contribution than deputy minister F. C. T. O'Hara. Under the Canadian system the minister of a department is appointed by the party in power, and so comes and goes at the whim of the electorate. Deputy ministers are selected from senior civil servants and usually remain in office despite changes in government in order to provide some continuity

of administration. O'Hara retained his position with Trade and Commerce from 1908 to 1931 and was thus able to devote fourteen years to the task of constant support and encouragement of the Bureau. Given such guidance and leadership it was unfortunate that the time of the Bureau's greatest need should coincide with the time of the government's greatest economies, and the inability of the Bureau to move promptly into the production of sound films was a blow from which it never fully recovered. Apart from the constraints of the depression years, the government financial system of votes and estimates often proved too cumbersome and inflexible to serve the urgent needs of the Bureau. From Norrish through to Grierson, the plodding pace of the Treasury and the Civil Service Commission was to prove an irritant, and played an insidious part in the slow suffocation of initiative and creativity in the Bureau.

Grierson was another of the outstanding men who helped to guide the Bureau's destiny. When he came on the scene in 1938, Parmelee had already suggested some minor changes, but it needed a man of Grierson's experience, energy and vision to inject the sagging Bureau with new vitality and renewed enthusiasm, so that it could be absorbed into a greater entity rather than collapsing under the weight of its own apathy and conservatism.

On the technical side, Badgely too was a driving force for the Bureau, but his contribution would have been greater had he encouraged the development of a strong, creative force among his staff. However, in this omission Badgely was not solely at fault, for the apathetic policy of the government toward the Canadian feature film industry left him with few local points of reference, and no pool of talented and experienced young film-makers from whom to draw ideas and personnel. The result of this neglect was to make the basic Bureau film less attractive to the overseas audience, which in turn was rapidly becoming more and more sophisticated in its choice of screen entertainment.

The reasons for the decline are many, but the accomplishments of the Bureau were legion. The scope of its distribution can still be seen in the numbers of Bureau films that exist in collections scattered throughout the world, prints of which are actively being sought by the home government as interest in the subject of film continues to grow. But no study of Canada's public film industry can be called complete without some knowledge of the pioneering work of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau from 1917 to 1941, which set the stage for much of what was to follow.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Ministers of Trade and Commerce

Rt. Hon. Sir George E. Foster – 1911-1921
Hon. H. H. Stevens – 1921-1921
Hon. J. A. Robb – 1921-1923
Hon. Thomas A. Low – 1923-1925
Hon. J. A. Robb (Acting Minister) – 1925-1926
J. D. Chaplin – 1926-1926
James Malcolm – 1926-1930
H. H. Stevens – 1930-1934
R. B. Hanson – 1934-1935
W. D. Euler – 1935-1940
Jas. A. MacKinnon – 1940-1948

Deputy Ministers

F. C. T. O'Hara – 1908-1931
J. G. Parmelee – 1931-1940
L. D. Wilgress – 1940-1942

Bureau Directors

B. E. Norrish – 1917-1920
R. S. Peck – (acting) – 1920-1921
R. S. Peck – 1921-1927
F. C. Badgely – 1927-1941

SOURCE: Historical Section, Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

APPENDIX B

Original Equipment Purchase, Exhibits and Publicity Bureau 1918

Bell and Howell Cinematograph Camera with 50, 75 and 232 mm
lenses with mount — view-finder with mount \$ 940.00

1 Bell and Howell Tripod with Swivel Head and Universal Panoram
and Tilting Head 150.00

5 200 ft. aluminum magazines 25.00

4 400 ft. aluminum magazines 30.00

12 magazine spools 3.00

1 trunk to receive camera and accessories 37.50

1 camera carrying case 15.00

1 magazine carrying case 10.00

Georz Equipment

1 sliding excenter attachment 12.50

1 round closing dissolving shutter 30.00

1 resolvable mask box attachment 17.00

1 double exposure shutter 30.00

1 square dissolving shutter 30.00

1 Bell and Howell front vignetting equipment 15.00

1 extension bellows 5.00

Perforators

1 Bell and Howell standard film perforator with	
2 sets punches	
2 sets pilots	
2 dies	
2 suction cleaners and 1 set S.C. attachments	
1 motor for perforator drive	
1 exhaust for use with suction cleaner	1,010.00

Printing Machines

1 duplex standard continuous feed film printer complete with motor.	1,000.00
---	----------

Still Photographic Equipment

1 improved model Empire State Century View Camera	\$ 30.00
1 lens and shutter	100.00
1 tripod	8.00
1 F. and S. printing cabinet	50.00
1 F. and S. laboratory stand	45.00
1 F. and S. lantern slide attachment	12.00
1 graphic enlarging camera	35.00
Sundries	<u>50.00</u>
	\$3,689.00
Customs duties at 25% + 7%	<u>1,198.93</u>
	<u>\$4,887.97</u>

SOURCE: Public Archives RG20 107 24089, Vol. 1, circa March 1918.

APPENDIX C

Votes and Salaries for the Motion Picture Bureau 1929-1940

	<i>Vote</i>	<i>Salaries</i>	<i>Total</i>
1929-30	\$ 75,000	\$35,304.21	\$110,304.21
1930-31	75,000	39,829.19	114,829.19
1931-32	65,000	43,548.81	108,548.81
1932-33	45,000	39,693.50	84,693.50
1933-34	70,000	38,549.70	108,549.70
1934-35	50,000	39,245.13	89,245.13
1935-36	40,000	46,169.96	86,169.96
1936-37	40,800	49,300.50	90,100.50
1937-38	41,880	52,138.17	94,018.17
1938-39	88,059	(including salaries)	
1939-40	150,000	(including salaries)*	

SOURCE: Canadian Public Archives RG20 B1 578 TA383

*Includes estimated production costs of 5 or 6 sound films of a documentary nature.

NOTE: "Vote" is the amount of money allocated to the department annually by the treasury, usually not including salaries.

No comprehensive information available on votes and salaries prior to 1929.

APPENDIX D

Expenditures and Revenue for the Motion Picture Bureau 1920-1941

<i>Year</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Revenue</i>
1920-21	---	\$11,917.06
1921-22	---	2,805.27
1922-23	\$ 23,303.17	16,141.10
1923-24	27,689.09	17,090.98
1924-25	14,112.35	27,876.79
1925-26	24,820.32	22,163.50
1926-27	29,941.23	15,129.08
1927-28	34,994.39	17,912.26
1928-29	49,943.63	25,883.29
1929-30	74,128.50	23,416.18
1930-31	65,377.48	29,444.85
1931-32	53,892.07	26,668.02
1932-33	25,132.44	9,876.66
1933-34	40,624.56	6,271.64
1934-35	38,810.43	8,225.64
1935-36	30,176.99	12,027.74
1936-37	40,571.07	22,618.04
1937-38	37,065.98	17,574.69
1938-39	85,024.99*	29,049.97
1939-40	142,126.04*	24,315.16
1940-41	103,033.40*T	58,027.95

SOURCE: Trade and Commerce Annual Reports

*Includes salaries.

T_{NFB} vote for this year was \$55,805.20 in addition to the vote for the Motion Picture Bureau.

NOTE: Expenditures before 1922-23 are not listed separately for the Motion Picture Bureau — they are included under Trade Promotion.

APPENDIX E

Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau Total Number of Theatrical and Non-Theatrical Prints in Circulation 1929-1941

	1929-30	1930-31	1931-32	1932-33	1933-34	1934-35	1935-36	1936-37	1937-38	1938-39	1939-40	1940-41
Australia, N.Z., Tasmania	220	210	200	150	150	150	150	185	232	199	279	368
Austria, Czechoslovakia	43	63	75	84	84	84	84	84	84	86	89	—
(Cen. Europe)	41	55	75	31	31	31	31	31	31	55	76	—
Belgium	550	770	750	1375	1375	1280	1215	1376	1646	1700	1500	1827
Canada	12	46	70	40	40	51	51	59	67	47	51	97*
China	22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
Cuba	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Czechoslovakia	81	87	100	50	51	51	51	63	63	51	56	58 Swit. only
France, Switzerland	63	72	90	120	120	120	96	96	96	83	83	—
Germany	290	353	340	350	367	387	387	506	531	524	530	935
U.K.	24	25	—	36	36	40	40	33	33	33	35	—
Hawaii	32	48	48	46	51	51	51	51	51	33	33	—
Holland	4	6	—	—	—	—	—	17	17	—	39	61
India	121	121	100	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	8
Italy	14	34	40	30	30	30	30	30	30	19	19	29
Japan	51	47	61	50	56	62	62	64	64	64	64	—
Scandinavia	55	50	50	33	33	39	39	39	39	45	83	83
S. Africa	88	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	30	38	56
S. America	20	20	20	12	12	12	12	23	27	16	33	*
Straits Settlements	1674	2149	2215	2416	2654	2831	3258	3579	3794	3160	3496	3248
U.S.	75	75	60	30	36	36	53	53	69	45	45	23
West Indies	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greece, Turkey & Near East)	—	—	—	—	12	12	28	48	48	35	43	19
TOTAL	3495	4331	4394	5023	5308	5437	5808	6507	7092	6295	6662	6820

SOURCE: Trade and Commerce Annual Reports

No comprehensive information available on distribution before 1929.

*Total for China includes Straits Settlements, due to changes in distribution this year.

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